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Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

The risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East

Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum*

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* The present report was received after the submission of the main report.

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Replies received from Governments

Egypt

[6 October 2003]

1. Egypt's commitment to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is unquestionable. It was at the request of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Egypt that the item "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East" was first inscribed on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1974. Since that date, the Assembly has annually adopted a resolution, by consensus since 1980, on this matter. Throughout the years, Egypt has continued to play a consistently leading role in promoting the objective of ridding the Middle East of the threat of nuclear weapons.

2. As a State party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, and a signatory to the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty (Pelindaba Treaty), Egypt has clearly and unambiguously demonstrated its rejection of the nuclear option, as it represents a major threat to peace, security and stability in the Middle East. Today, Egypt notes that while all States of the Middle East have become parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, Israel regrettably persists in ignoring repeated calls for its adherence to the Treaty and placement of all its nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards, thereby perpetuating a dangerous imbalance in the region.

3. The importance given during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is a testimony to the commitment of the international community to the establishment of such a zone in the Middle East. The 2000 Review Conference, in following up on the resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty, unanimously approved, in its final document, a reaffirmation of the importance of Israel's accession to the Treaty and placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards. Indeed, in its final document, the 2000 Review Conference:

> "recalls that paragraph 4 of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East 'calls upon all States in the Middle East that have not yet done so, without exception, to accede to the Treaty as soon as possible and to place their nuclear facilities under full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards.' The Conference notes, in this connection, that the report of the United Nations Secretariat on the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East (NPT/CONF.2000/7) states that several States have acceded to the Treaty and that, with these accessions, all States of the region of the Middle East, with the exception of Israel, are States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The Conference welcomes the accession of those States and reaffirms the importance of Israel's accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the placement of all its nuclear facilities under comprehensive IAEA safeguards, in realizing the goal of universal adherence to the Treaty in the Middle East." [NPT/CONF.2000/28 (Part I), article VII, para. 16]

4. Egypt is cognizant of the fact that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is a difficult task. Indeed, each region of the world has its own characteristics, and each zone must be tailored to suit those characteristics. However, Egypt does not share the view that full-scale peace and fully developed political and economic relations between all States of the region are a prerequisite for the commencement of negotiations on the establishment of a zone. If such an argument were correct, it is unlikely that the Treaty of Tlatelolco or even the Treaty of Pelindaba would ever have been negotiated. Regrettably, conflict continues to rage in various parts of Africa to this very day, yet such conflicts were not invoked as reasons to prevent negotiations on an African nuclear-weapon-free zone. To Egypt, experience has shown that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in areas of tension and conflict does indeed contribute to easing tensions, preventing conflicts and developing peaceful relations and mutual cooperation.

5. For a nuclear-weapon-free zone to come about in any area of the world, there must exist a regional commitment to this objective. As is testified to by the annual adoption of a consensus resolution on the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone by the General Assembly, and by the adoption of consensus guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangement freely arrived at among States of the region concerned by the Disarmament Commission at its 1999 substantive session, such a commitment is present in the Middle East. In this connection, Egypt notes with satisfaction that there is agreement that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East as well as the development of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction should be encouraged. Egypt considers that it is imperative that those commitments be turned into concrete actions if they are to have a determining and positive impact on the Middle East peace process.

6. However, and while Egypt continues to table its annual resolution entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East", it cannot help but notice that the resolution's adoption by consensus is not complemented by an equally consensual commitment to its implementation. Indeed, not all of the States Members of the United Nations seem committed to acting effectively with a view to ridding the Middle East of nuclear weapons. Few concrete steps, if any, have been taken with the aim of realizing the objectives of the resolution. This situation perdures despite the international community's invigorated commitment to the cause of non-proliferation in the world following the criminal and tragic events of 11 September.

7. Making negotiations on a Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone contingent upon an ever-growing list of prerequisites is a sure recipe for failure. In Egypt's view, the only prerequisite for negotiations to commence on the establishment of a zone in the Middle East is that States in the region have the political will to sit together and commence negotiations. Viewing the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone as no more than an act that "sets the seal on a durable peace" is not a vision that is shared by Egypt. A Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zone is, in and of itself, an important confidence-building measure and an act of political reconciliation. Furthermore, maintaining that fully fledged relations of peace must exist before talks on such a zone can commence, while at the same time persisting to maintain a nuclear option, are two mutually exclusive and contradictory arguments. In a region as volatile as the Middle East, no solid and durable peace can be achieved while a nuclear threat continues to loom over the region.

8. The international community has given much attention to recent cases of proliferation concern, sometimes seeking new approaches, and always devoting significant resources to the task. Yet, Israel escapes similar attention, and is subjected to little more than lukewarm verbal calls for adherence to the Treaty and application of IAEA safeguards.

9. Egypt will continue to pursue the objective of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East at the earliest time based on the outcome of the 2000 Review Conference. It will also pursue its April 1990 initiative for the establishment, in the Middle East, of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction. In its endeavours, it will continue to seek the support of the international community and of all those who are committed to ridding the world, both at the regional and global levels, of the threat of nuclear weapons.

Italy*

[16 September 2003]

1. As in previous years, at the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly the States members of the European Union aligned themselves with the consensus on General Assembly resolution 57/55 entitled "Establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone in the region of the Middle East".

2. The States members of the European Union hereby wish to provide the following common reply to paragraph 10 of the resolution, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to pursue consultations with the States of the region and other concerned States, in accordance with paragraph 7 of resolution 46/30 and taking into account the evolving situation in the region, and to seek from those States their views on the measures outlined in chapters III and IV of the study annexed to his report of 10 October 1990 (A/45/435) or other relevant measures, in order to move towards the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

3. The European Union recalls that consensus has been reached by the General Assembly since its thirty-fifth session that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would greatly enhance international peace and security.

4. The European Union also recalls the guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, adopted by the Disarmament Conference at its 1999 session, stipulating that nuclear-weapon-free zones should be based on arrangements freely arrived at by the States of the region.

5. In addition the European Union takes note of Security Council resolution 687 (1991) recalling the goal of establishing the Middle East a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and all missiles for their delivery.

6. The European Union also takes into consideration the Secretary-General's report of 10 October 1990 (A/49/435), which in its conclusions indicates that the nuclear threat can be effectively and permanently eliminated only if a pattern of sound regional security relationships is developed.

* On behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the European Union.

7. The European Union is cognizant of the importance of confidence-building measures, such as nuclear-weapon-free zones. However the establishment of such a zone as well as of a zone free from weapons of mass destruction is first and foremost the responsibility of the States of the region.

8. The European Union remains fully committed to the relevant Security Council resolutions and the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapon as well as to the conclusions of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty and calls upon all States in the region that have not yet done so to accede to the Treaty as well as to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction and to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. Further, the European Union calls upon the States of the region to establish an effectively verifiable zone free of nuclear weapons, as well as of other weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. The European Union believes that the accession of all States in the region to the IAEA comprehensive safeguards system and the additional protocol should be a priority for the international community as a whole and would represent a crucial contribution to an overall improvement for the security and confidence in the Middle East.

9. Therefore the European Union urges the States of the region to make every effort in order to develop peaceful and friendly relations, which would greatly contribute to a secure and stable environment for all of them. This in turn would render possible the establishment of a zone free from all weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery in the Middle East.